

Think You're Ready?

PILLS HOT TOPIC

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*What it takes to get into
pharmacy school*



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So, what does it really take to get into the pharmacy school of your dreams? Is it that you have maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout undergrad? Is it that you have dedicated hundreds of hours volunteering? Is it that you have worked as a pharmacy technician for several years now and feel as though you are ready to take that next step? Or is it that you just have what many others don't?

Well, frankly, it is not just one of the above that makes you a competitive candidate for pharmacy school. It takes a compilation of quality characteristics as well as dedication and diversifying yourself in many ways. Having served on the Pacific University School of Pharmacy Admissions Committee for two years now, I have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly. My involvement includes reading and scoring applications, selecting who to interview, interviewing candidates, working with other Admission Committee members to fill the upcoming class, and providing feedback for application and interview improvement. I have gained significant insight in terms of what makes a candidate competitive and would like to share this with you now.

1. GPA - I know, it is not EVERYTHING but it surely is a quick and easy way to determine many characteristics of a candidate. Most schools accept GPAs in the high twos/lower threes but aim as high as possible and place emphasis on your science courses, as these are what mostly pertains to pharmacy school.
2. Get involved - I am sure you have heard it before but I will say it again, volunteer your free time! I don't mean in just one program - diversify yourself. Get involved in college related volunteer work as well as community services to ensure your versatility.

3. Participate - How else can you prove that you are a team player and get along with others? Join a club, group or an intramural team that will provide you with some extracurricular activity. Better yet, be the team captain or hold a position in a club. That will show that you have leadership capabilities as well.
4. Pharmacy experience - After all, how does the school of your dreams know you want to practice pharmacy if you have yet to set foot in a pharmacy or even talk to a pharmacist?! How do you even know you want to be a pharmacist? Try to volunteer or get a job in a pharmacy, even if it is a clerk job. Then you can justify that you have seen the practice, know this is what you want to do, and are committed to the lifelong learning that the profession requires.
5. Work experience - do you work in addition to your 4.0 GPA and full-time class schedule!? Work experience shows that you are reliable and are able to manage your time while being a student. Also, your dream school might be curious to know if you have held a job in the healthcare field as well as jobs that are non-healthcare related.
6. Network - begin to establish relationships with professors, pharmacists, advisors or people who you would want to write you a letter of recommendation one day. Now, I don't mean just any letter of recommendation, I mean a GOOD letter. One that speaks highly of your talents, abilities, accomplishments and why you would be a great addition to the profession. Ensure that this person knows enough about you and is invested in your future to enable them to write a quality letter.
7. Ponder - Begin to think about why you want to go into the field of pharmacy and what it is you would like to do with your career once you graduate pharmacy school. There is nothing better than a student with a well thought out plan but who is also open for change and trying new things.
8. Research - **KNOW THE PROFESSION.** By this I mean look into the current and upcoming things happening in the world of pharmacy. Did you know pharmacists are sworn into the profession with a Code of Ethics? Check them out and be sure you can abide by them.

I am not saying that you have to have all of these to be considered for pharmacy school but it is a good place to start your focus. And remember, all of this is about what makes you stand out on paper versus the next candidate who also has a 4.0 GPA and a Bachelors degree in biochemistry. The next step is acing your interview once you are given the opportunity! Good luck!